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Housekeeper's Chat

Wednesday, November 26, 1930.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Setting the Holiday Table." Suggestions approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: Radio Cook Book.

When Betty Lou's mother told her that she was to have full charge of setting the Thanksgiving table, Betty Lou was delighted. Although she is only 12 or 13 years old, Betty Lou has a knack of making a dining table look artistic.

"What are you going to decorate your table with?" I asked Betty Lou.

"Haven't decided for sure," said Betty Lou. "There are lots of things I could use--fruit, flowers, leaves, cones, evergreen branches, bittersweet, and nuts. Of course I wouldn't use all of these, at one time. For instance, if I use fruit and nuts, I won't use flowers, because they don't seem to belong together.

"Last year," continued Betty Lou, "my centerpiece was mother's silver cake basket, filled with fruit and nuts. Mother has a fruit bowl, but it has so many decorations painted on the outside, that the fruit inside doesn't show up at all. That's why I used the plain silver cake basket.

"This year I might use a flower centerpiece, as a change. We have chrysanthemums. I don't like tall chrysanthemums, on a table, because they have such long stems that they must be put in tall vases. Then people can't see each other, over the centerpiece. I believe I'll have a centerpiece of little tiny chrysanthemums, and put them in the low flower bowl. Then I can use four candlesticks, around the flower bowl. Would you like that, Aunt Sammy?"

"Very much," I said. "Will you have place cards?"

"Yes, because I want the table to look very extra special. With a flower centerpiece, I think a place card, with a spray of flowers, would be pretty. I can paint the place cards myself. Of course they will be very simple."

Betty Lou has learned that simplicity is the guiding factor in table-setting. She doesn't like a table which is over-crowded, or one which is elaborately decorated. This morning she helped polish the silver and glass ware, and filled the salts and peppers.

Betty Lou will set the table about an hour before dinner time, to get this task off her mind, and give her time to rearrange the decorations, if necessary. Besides, if the table is set 50 or 60 minutes before dinner is served, there is time to make sure that "everything is on." You know how embarrassing it is, to discover, at the last minute, that the carving knife and fork have been forgotten.

First, Betty Lou will place a silence cloth on the table. Over this she will lay the best linen tablecloth, perfectly straight, with the crease in the exact middle of the table, from head to foot. In the center of the table she will place the flower bowl, with its tiny bright chrysanthemums in fall colors. The four candlesticks flank the flower bowl. The yellow candles are tall enough that the light will not shine in the eyes of the guests.

The service plates and the silver are placed about one inch from the edge of the table. Knives to the right, with the cutting edge toward the plate; spoons to the right, bowl up; and forks to the left. The water glasses are placed to the right, above the knife. Bread-and-butter plates, with the butter spreader on the plate, go to the left, and salts and peppers between every two places. The two pretty bonbon dishes will hold salted nuts and candies.

When Betty Lou gets this far in her table-setting, she will stand off and survey her work with a critical eye. There! She has forgotten the napkins. The napkins are placed to the left. Now everything seems to be quite all right. The tablecloth is perfectly straight. It has been ironed so carefully that the flower design fairly gleams. Silverware, china, and glassware, sparkle.

Betty Lou has another responsibility this year. Her cousin Dorothy is coming with her Aunt Ida for the holidays, and mother has asked Betty Lou to see that Aunt Ida's room has everything in it a guest is likely to need. Dorothy will share Betty's room. That means clearing out at least one bureau drawer for her guest and making room at one end of the closet so she can hang up her dresses. A few extra hangers will be needed.

Of course mother has seen to it that both rooms are cleaned in preparation for the guests. There will probably be fresh curtains at the windows. Certainly there will be clean scarfs on the dressers, and tables. Face cloths, towels, and soap will be laid out ready. A clothes brush, will be handy, and some needles and thread. Betty Lou has a little sewing kit especially for guests. It just wouldn't do, to have to hunt up those things

in the middle of the Thanksgiving dinner preparations.

In Aunt Ida's room mother has suggested putting two or three of the new magazines, some notepaper, pen and ink, and a stronger bulb in the bedside lamp, in case her visitor wants to read or write letters at night. Anything else? Yes, Aunt Ida will want to help with the dinner. So Betty Lou is going to have a crisp fresh apron ready for her.

We have enough time left to answer a question or two. Here's one from a listener who wants to know the truth about candy. "Is there any harm in candy, if one doesn't eat too much of it?" she asks.

No, it's just a case of "moderation in all things". Sugar is one of the few foods for which a taste does not need to be developed. It is universally liked. Because of this fact, it is easy to over-indulge in sweet foods. It may displace other foods which are needed for body building and regulating.

Sweets should not be taken on an empty stomach, as they are irritating to the lining membrane of the stomach. They are best taken in moderation at the end of a meal -- a piece or two of candy not more than once a day, so that it will be diluted by the food already eaten. Large quantities of sweets should never be indulged in, even at the end of a meal.

There -- is your question answered?

Here's one from a woman who wants to have candied sweet potatoes in her Thanksgiving menu. That's a fine idea, if she understands that then she will not need to have white potatoes too, or any other starchy vegetable.

You will find the recipe for candied sweet potatoes on page 21 of the Radio Cookbook. And just above it is one for sweet potatoes with apples. Either of these would be good with your turkey.

No menus or recipes tomorrow, but a little food for reflection, instead,

Thursday: Food for Reflection.

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